

Causes and Cures of Depression: Q+A

Q: You're not a psychologist or psychiatrist, so why are you qualified to write this book?

A: I spent the first three decades of my life being severely and chronically depressed. My first depression happened when I was six years' old, and throughout my teens and early 20s I had seriously depressed episodes that sometimes lasted a year or more.

In my early 30s, the depressions kind of morphed into a depressed-anxious state, and I started having troubles breathing and sleeping. At that point, I went to a psychologist for help.

The woman I saw was meant to be one of the top 10 shrinks in the country, and she definitely helped me with the panic attacks. But the depressions continued, and even worsened, as life started to get more stressful and complicated.

At one point, I was seeing 3 shrinks and everyone was trying to tell me that pills was the only way to go. But I felt instinctively that pills were just a sticking-plaster, and not a real solution. So I carried on digging and trying different holistic approaches, until finally I started to get a real picture of what was underneath my depressions, and how to deal with them.

Using the three pronged God-based holistic health approach I set out in the book, I've barely been depressed at all over the last 5 years – and when I do occasionally still get depressed, I bounce back within a day or two.

In the course of my journey, I got certified in a bunch of different holistic health disciplines, including aromatherapy and energy medicine, and I also founded the Jewish Emotional Health Institute and went into private practice to start teaching and sharing my approach with others.

Via my classes, books, blog and other writing, I've helped hundreds of people get to grips with the deeper reasons for their negative emotions, including depression.

Q: Can you define your God-based holistic health approach to treating depression?

A: Sure, it's pretty simple: **Depression occurs for one of three reasons:**

- 1) **At the soul level:** People feel their life is meaningless; they don't have a strong enough belief system and / or connection to God to weather the inevitable difficulties of life
- 2) **At the mind / emotional level:** They're spending too much time with negative people who pull them down, suck them dry, and make them feel worthless.
- 3) **At the body level:** Energetically, there's three things that pull a person into depression: the Homolateral Energy State; when the Spleen Meridian energy gets weakened or depleted; and ingratitude.

If any one of these three areas are compromised, then a person is much more vulnerable to falling into depression.

Q: In your book, you come out with some pretty strong statements that are 'anti' anti-depressants. How come?

A: Conventional medicine (egged on by the pharmacology companies) is obsessed with finding a biological, or physical, solution to every mental health problem. They're convinced that human happiness and wellbeing is just a matter of sticking the right chemicals into the equation. They rarely take into account that a person's environment and relationships can actually cause physiological changes in the way their body works; and the idea that a person's spiritual dimension, or soul, can have anything to do with depression is usually completely ignored by the medical establishment.

People get depressed because something fundamental needs to change in their relationships, environment, belief system or life. I know it's not PC to say it, but taking anti-depressants is just a way of 'numbing the pain'. It's not solving the long-term problem, and it's questionable whether it's even solving the short-term problem for a lot of people.

I know many people who weren't helped by anti-depressants, including one client of mine who was taking two different anti-depressants for more than 20 years, but who was still so depressed they often couldn't get out of bed.

When you add into the mix the fact that the 'chemical imbalance' that so many people cite as the cause of depression is still a completely unproven theory, you get a situation where millions of people are being recklessly prescribed drugs – many of which have serious side effects – which often don't even work, and aren't helping the person to address the real causes of their depression.

Q: But many people swear by their meds...

A: There's a growing body of research on the placebo affect connected with anti-depressants. In a nutshell, when someone believes that something will help them, it often does. There's mounting evidence that anti-depressants are as effective as sugar pills, in clinical trials - except the sugar pills don't come with a huge bunch of side effects.

To come at the question from a different angle, when someone is in acute psychological pain, any medication that numbs that state or diminishes it will be experienced as 'helping' in some way. Sometimes, if the situation is particularly severe, 'numbing' may be the best route to go temporarily, to give the person some much-needed respite. But it's not a long-term solution.

Q: So what is?

A: As I set out in my book, the problem has to be tackled across the three levels of body, mind and soul. A depressed person has to feel that they're valuable; that their life is meaningful, and that everything that happens to them is for a reason. When we don't have that context and we feel like our life is meaningless, that opens the door for us to get depressed as soon as we hit a tough patch.

The way you get that spiritual context is by involving God in your life as much as possible, in whatever way works for you.

Next, there are people and things in our environment that are triggering our depressions. If we spend a lot of time with critical, manipulative, blaming, angry, uncaring, negative people, we'll

get depressed. If we spend more time with people who encourage us to see the good in ourselves and in others, we'll start to feel much happier.

The news is also a non-stop source of negativity and stress, and it's also definitely tipping people over into depression. Lastly, looking too much at the 'bad' side of things, instead of concentrating on the good can also contribute to feeling depressed.

Then there's the energy side of things. When the body's energy is weak or compromised – by pollution, junk food, electro-magnetic smog, serious illnesses, a sedentary lifestyle, or other 'shocks' to the system, that can also cause depression.

Once you know what's really triggering the depression, then you can start to fix the problem.

Q: Is it really possible to 'cure' depression, as you're claiming?

A: Absolutely! On the condition that you understand what's triggering it, and you take steps to minimize and avoid the triggers as much as possible. But usually, achieving that sort of self-awareness takes a lot of hard work, time and patience. Intellectually knowing that 'critical people bring you down' is one thing; being able to spot those people in your own circle, and to acknowledge their impact on your mental health, is something else entirely.

Ditto, getting enough exercise. It's great to have the knowledge that regular exercise is more effective than meds at permanently beating depression. But actually going for a run, or showing up for the gym class doesn't automatically follow-on from having that knowledge.

That's really where talking to God comes in to its own. As long as you keep that relationship going, somehow you'll start finding the way through the challenges facing you, and ultimately, it will come good.

Q: So 'Causes and Cures of Depression' is not a quick fix, but a serious program of inner work?

A: There are no quick fixes when it comes to serious emotional challenges like depression – and that applies across the board, whatever route you choose to deal with the problem. God always sends us our issues and problems for a reason. We need to dig deep, ask ourselves some hard questions, and look for the good that's hidden in our difficulties. If we're holding God's hand, sooner or later He'll show us the way out of the problem, and also what buried treasure we got from going through it all.

And once we've found it, nothing and no-one can take it away from us.